

A Fairer Future: How the Mitigation Action Facility Advances Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

Gender Justice as a Key Feature of the Mitigation Action Facility

Climate action is most effective when it leaves no one behind. Recognising this, the Mitigation Action Facility (MAF) has placed Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) at the heart of its mission. With the introduction of an ambitious Gender Vision in September 2022, the Facility deepened its commitment to gender justice – ensuring that all people, regardless of gender identity or social background, have equal rights, opportunities, and decision-making power in climate-related measures. The Gender Vision is guided by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as well as the Paris Agreement. The MAF is committed to assisting countries in their implementation of the UNFCCC Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) and its Gender Action Plan, Sustainable Development Goal 5 and other relevant international, regional and national mechanisms for gender justice.



This vision is brought to life through MAF's Gender Action Plan (GAP), which applies to all MAF-funded projects. The GAP establishes clear requirements to identify and address gender inequalities while promoting inclusive participation across all levels. It guides projects to systematically integrate GESI considerations into design, implementation, and evaluation processes, ensuring that climate action also promotes social equity.

To support projects in meeting these requirements, the Technical Support Unit (TSU) provides targeted workshops, expert training, and close guidance. By offering tailored assistance to navigate context-specific challenges, the TSU helps projects structurally embed GESI actions into their work. This sustained support ensures that gender equity and social inclusion are not just add-ons for MAF-funded projects but are integral for effective and sustainable climate solutions.

Turning Strategy into Reality: Implementing Gender-Transformative Approaches Through Pilot Activities

MAF actively encourages and supports projects in adopting gender-transformative measures. These initiatives extend beyond addressing immediate gender gaps to challenge and reshape the underlying social norms and power dynamics driving inequality. As part of its GAP implementation, the MAF facilitates transformative pilot activities that test and scale innovative approaches for greater social impact within climate action. The following MAF-funded projects have implemented gender-transformative pilot activities and can serve as good practice examples:

Thriving through Waste Solutions: The Pink Material Recovery Facility in India



OBJECTIVE

The project India - Waste Solutions for a Circular Economy aims to achieve a low-carbon transformation of the Indian waste sector. As part of its Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) strategy, the project has started the Pink Material Recovery Facility (MRF). The initiative promotes gender inclusivity and sustainable waste management by providing women with formal employment, skill development, and leadership opportunities in the waste sector.

CONTEXT

Despite the fact that approximately half of the waste pickers in India are women, the majority of them earn significantly lower incomes than their male counterparts. The wage disparity is largely due to reduced working hours, as many women balance →



Female staff segregating dry waste at the Pink Material Recovery Facility in Patna, India.

multiple responsibilities, including household duties and child-care. In the Patna region of northern India, deep-rooted societal norms often impede women's access to permanent, skilled employment and leadership roles, thereby limiting their professional advancement.

GESI INTERVENTION

The Pink MRF employs a gender-transformative approach by addressing structural inequalities and creating new opportunities for women in the waste sector. The initiative integrates informal female waste workers into its operations, providing them with formal employment, skills development, and a stable income. The women benefit from higher wages than in the informal sector, fixed working hours, and a secure work environment. Furthermore, the project encourages leadership development by appointing women to supervisory roles, increasing their economic autonomy and promoting a broader shift in power dynamics and gender norms.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Recognising the social and cultural pressures that led to the dropout of several female staff members, the project adapted its leadership structure by introducing a male-female tandem model. In this setup, a male supervisor manages external tasks, such as negotiations with clients, while a female supervisor oversees internal operations. These can encompass training and supporting waste segregation staff in identifying and sorting plastic types, managing the dispatch of various dry waste fractions (including plastics, paper, and cardboard), and ensuring the quality and quantity of materials processed and leaving the facility. The collaborative tandem model addresses cultural barriers while enabling women to assume leadership positions.



"Life was difficult. Now it is better than roaming around looking for waste. I leave for work at nine in the morning and it gets over by six pm. I have a bank account now. My life has got better."

Sunita Devi transitioned from informal rag collecting to a secure job with fixed working hours and a consistent income through entering the Pink Material Recovery Facility project.

IMPACT

The Pink MRF has created new employment opportunities for women who were previously engaged in informal waste collection under precarious conditions. These women now have access to better wages and job security, improving their economic independence. By placing women in decision-making roles, the project has also contributed to shifting gender norms in the community, where female leadership in the waste sector was previously unheard of. The introduction of the male-female leadership tandem has not only improved staff retention but also created more inclusive and adaptive management practices. The Pink MRF now serves as both a model for environmental responsibility and a catalyst for gender inclusivity in the Indian waste sector. Operationally, awareness campaigns led to both higher quantities and improved the quality of recyclable material, enabling the Pink MRF to reach its financial break-even point.

Powering Equality: Supporting Female Professionals in the Energy Efficiency Sector in Brazil



OBJECTIVE

The project Brazil - Industrial Energy Efficiency (PotencializEE) aims to promote energy efficiency investments in small and medium-sized industrial enterprises (SMEs) in Brazil. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion are core pillars of the project's strategy. PotencializEE supports women professionals through networking, mentoring, and gender-sensitization action to bridge the gender gap in the Brazilian energy efficiency sector.

CONTEXT

In the Brazilian energy efficiency sector, women face significant barriers when pursuing employment opportunities and advancing in their careers, despite being equally or more qualified than their male counterparts. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2019), women have on average more years of formal education than men (8 years compared to 7.6 years for men), yet they occupy only 3% of senior leadership positions. Additionally, women experience an extra workload of approximately 18.5 hours per week due to unpaid care responsibilities, further limiting their professional growth. Gender stereotypes and limited access to professional networks exacerbate these challenges, creating a significant gender gap.

GESI INTERVENTION

To address the barriers faced by women, the PotencializEE project implemented targeted pilot activities that aimed to empower and develop female professionals in the energy efficiency sector. In 2022, the project assisted in the organising and hosting of a networking event for women, entitled "The First Women in Energy Efficiency Congress". The panel sessions discussed topics like education as a vehicle for the inclusion of women in the energy sector, successful careers and impact in the segment, and the future of the energy sector. The event attracted more than 700 female participants and the Secretary of State for Energy Transition and Planning at the Ministry of



Certified female energy auditors in Brazil.





“At this point in my career, the mentorship greatly helps me develop my next steps, put them on a timeline, and define my short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals.”

Thaís Harumi – female energy efficiency specialist engineer in São Paulo.



“I think the mentorship provided knowledge beyond engineering. We can work in the energy field because it’s an area that’s very interconnected with various other areas of knowledge.”

Suzi Elaine Gasparini de Moraes – female energy efficiency specialist engineer in São Paulo.

Mines and Energy. It presented a valuable opportunity for women in the energy field to share their achievements and discuss upcoming sectoral endeavours.

Between July and September 2022, 30 women who had completed technical training with the Brazilian Industrial Apprenticeship Service (SENAI) participated in a Mentoring Program for Women in Energy Efficiency organized by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. The programme included modules on leadership development, assertive communication, emotional intelligence, and career planning, as well as inspiring talks from female leaders, including Sana Sousa, the General Coordinator of Energy Efficiency Policy at the Ministry of Mines and Energy (MME). The GIZ also organised a gender-sensitisation session for men working under the energy efficiency initiative to foster an inclusive work environment.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

The mentoring programme revealed that limited access to professional networks and male-dominated work environments are key barriers to the long-term career growth of women in the energy efficiency sector in Brazil. To overcome these impediments, the project plans to scale up its mentorship programme and to support the expansion of the Women for Energy and Efficiency Network (WEE) in 2025. The autonomous national network aims to empower women and promote gender equity across the entire Brazilian energy efficiency sector. It was established in 2023 as a result of the women mentoring programme.

IMPACT

The Mentoring Program for Women in Energy Efficiency had a positive impact on participants’ professional and personal development. More than two-thirds of the participants reported being highly satisfied with the programme and found the sessions directly applicable to their daily work. For example, participants learned about assertive communication to help negotiate better outcomes with clients and to develop leadership skills. The programme also provided career planning support, with some participants using the tools provided to chart a clearer path for their advancement in the energy sector. The programme’s success has led to a second round of mentoring in 2025, which will benefit an additional 60 women. In addition, the launch of the Women for Energy and Efficiency Network will provide a sustainable platform for female empowerment and long-term career support.

Advancing GESI Across Sectors

The MAF is committed to integrating GESI across its entire project portfolio. Projects led by various implementing partners are adopting gender-transformative approaches. These efforts span multiple sectors, including transportation, renewable energy, and agriculture. They aim to challenge stereotypes, empower women, and close gender data gaps. The following good practice examples highlight how GESI continues to be embedded across diverse MAF-supported projects:



TACKLING STEREOTYPES: GENDER-SENSITIVE STORYTELLING IN CABO VERDE

MAF's project on electric vehicles in Cabo Verde, which supports the government in refining and implementing its strategy for promoting electric vehicles, is addressing gender stereotypes through a gender-sensitive communication campaign. The project produced a promotional film featuring a prominent female journalist as

the central figure to boost the launch of electric vehicle (EV) subsidies in Cabo Verde. In the film, she undertakes a test drive, challenging the perception that e-mobility is a male-dominated field and encouraging broader acceptance of sustainable transport solutions.



BUILDING ALLIANCES: INSTITUTIONALISING GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN HONDURAS

The project Transforming the Livestock Sector in Honduras, which promotes a productive yet low-carbon livestock sector, is embedding gender considerations in its implementation process through a comprehensive gender-mainstreaming exercise. The effort is coordinated by an inter-institutional Gender Focal Group, which is comprised of representatives

from each implementing partner organization. The Gender Focal Group will be responsible to ensure that gender-sensitive strategies are applied throughout all project activities and institutional practices. The collaborative approach fosters synergies and provides ongoing mentoring and monitoring, ensuring long-term commitment to gender equality.



WOMEN IN STEM: INCREASING FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN NAMIBIA'S BIOMASS SECTOR

MAF's Biomass project in Namibia, which utilises the potential of invasive bush biomass for large-scale electricity generation, aims to address underrepresentation of women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. The project has committed to ensuring that 50% of its labour force across all

levels is female, including management and engineering positions in its power plant operations. To secure sustainable impact, the project will establish a vocational training programme aimed at attracting and training female candidates. This will help to build a future workforce of skilled female employees in a male-dominated sector.



CLOSING DATA GAPS: MONITORING WOMEN'S TIME USE IN GUATEMALA

Time poverty disproportionately affects women, particularly mothers, due to the time-consuming nature of unpaid care and household responsibilities. In Guatemala City, a recent study revealed that women spend an average of 37 hours per week cooking, with an additional 4 hours dedicated to collecting and preparing firewood. In response, MAF's project on Sustainable Cookstoves, which is

dedicated to promoting and developing the market for Improved Cook Stoves (ICS) in Guatemala, will monitor how the introduction of clean, electric cookstoves positively impacts women's time use and household expenditures. By gathering gender-disaggregated data, the project aims to reduce women's workload in and generate evidence-based insights for future policy and project designs.

Lessons from GESI Pilot Activities and Scaling Impact

Across the MAF portfolio, there is growing momentum to embed GESI into project design and implementation. Projects like the PotenzializEE in Brazil and Waste Solutions for a Circular Economy in India serve as good practice examples, offering training programmes for female workers, engineers and business owners that not only empower women but also challenge sectoral and cultural norms. These initiatives demonstrate a clear shift from commitment to action, showing how targeted GESI measures can create tangible outcomes. While progress is being made, achieving widespread and lasting change remains an ongoing effort. The MAF has drawn the following key insights from the existing pilot activities:

- Addressing gender disparities requires a **comprehensive understanding of local social, cultural, and economic conditions**. Conducting a context-specific gender analysis equips projects with the opportunity to develop tailored interventions that directly tackle barriers such as care responsibilities, time constraints, and stereotypes.
- Initiatives that provide **capacity development**, mentorship and leadership opportunities for women increase female engagement in sectors where they have been traditionally underrepresented. Investing in professional development fosters to greater career advancement and long-term inclusion.
- Establishing gender-focused coordination groups and embedding GESI into project governance structures can strengthen long-term **gender mainstreaming**, transitioning from sporadic activities to more systematic change.
- While pilot projects demonstrate promising approaches, their long-term success depends on efforts to integrate gender-transformative actions into **national policies, industry standards, and funding mechanisms** to create an enabling environment for sustained change.

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